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Bilingual Teaching in Belgian Schools.

London: C. J. CLAY AND SONS,
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS WAREHOUSE,
AVE MARIA LANE.

Glasgow: 50, WELLINGTON STREET.



Leipzig: F. A. BROCKHAUS.

New York: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

Bombay and Calcutta: MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD.

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Bilingual Teaching in Belgian Schools

being

The Report on a visit to Belgian Schools as Gilchrist
Travelling Student presented to the Court of
the University of Wales

by

T. R. DAWES, M.A. (Lond.),

Headmaster of the Pembroke Dock County School.



Cambridge :

At the University Press.

1902

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GENERAL

To the Court of the University of Wales.

21 Nov. 1900.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my report on Bilingual teaching in Belgian schools. In order to pursue my inquiry I spent some five weeks in Belgium at the beginning of 1899 and eight weeks during the months of July, August, and September. I visited elementary schools, secondary schools of various types, normal schools, and universities in different parts of Belgium, and had interviews with Inspectors, Journalists, Business men, Professors, and Schoolmasters. The Minister of Education provided me with letters of introduction to the various schools, where I was invariably gladly welcomed and all information was placed at my disposal. I received most valuable help and guidance from Messrs Michael Sadler and R. L. Morant of the Inquiry Department of the Board of Education. I was fortunate in being present at examinations in the different schools and at conferences of the teachers. During the whole of my visit schools of the various types were open save for a fortnight,

which I spent in the Public Libraries at Brussels and in attending conferences of teachers.

I am deeply grateful to the Court for the opportunity I have enjoyed of seeing the schools of Belgium and of familiarizing myself with the Flemish language. I trust that my report may have some effect in developing the teaching of Modern Languages according to the best methods, and of showing that the utilization for educational purposes of the native language of a country—though this language may not be widely used outside its borders—tends to aid the acquisition of other Modern Languages.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

T. R. DAWES.



THE LANGUAGES OF BELGIUM.

TWO races having widely different characteristics are united under the name Belgian. The Flemings, who are the most numerous, are a race of German extraction, brothers to the Dutch of the neighbouring kingdom of Holland, speaking the Low German language Flemish, which is practically identical with Dutch, and inhabiting the North-Western portion of Belgium, north of a line drawn through Courtraie and Louvain, and a small portion of Flanders now forming part of France. The Walloons, south of this line, are French alike in race and language, and while the sympathies of the Flemings lean to Holland and Germany, those of the Walloons turn rather to France. French and Flemish are thus the languages of Belgium. It is true that a French patois is spoken by many Walloons in the South, but this has no literature, and is merely a corrupt form of French. German is also spoken by many Belgians near the frontier of Germany—but when Belgium is termed a bilingual country the languages referred to are French and Flemish.

Though the majority of Belgians are Flemings the official language of Belgium was for many years French, and is so to a certain extent at the present time; but the progress of the Flemish movement which has for its object the maintenance of the Flemish tongue in Flanders, and indeed the spread of the language throughout Belgium, has brought about great changes, and tends to make the Belgians more and more a bilingual people. A glance at Belgium's chequered history accounts for the dominant position that French has held. Perhaps no country in Europe has seen such changes of government, such a variety of rulers as Belgium—at any rate during the last three centuries. In the seventeenth century it formed a part of the Spanish dominions, then, after coming under Austrian rule, it formed part of the French Empire till the Battle of Waterloo, when it was united with Holland and the two countries constituted the monarchy of Holland and Belgium. This kingdom only lasted till 1830.

Numerous grievances, such as the favouritism shown to Hollanders in all official positions, created great disaffection amongst the Belgians, and this feeling at length culminated in the revolution of 1830, when Belgium was again dissevered from Holland and became under King Leopold an independent kingdom. During these centuries Flemish always remained the language of the great majority of the people, but the language of the government,

of administration, of the law courts, of the schools, and generally of the upper classes, was French. During more than two centuries the religious corporations, who possessed the monopoly of education, had proscribed the Flemish (Dutch) language from hatred of the Dutch heretics who published Bibles and books judged dangerous for the Catholic faith, and thus the upper and middle classes, educated in schools in which the language was French, discarded Flemish and learned to despise it. The "masses" retained their native tongue; but their children for the most part received no education; the national schools charged fees they could not pay, and the teaching was in a language they did not understand. The French revolutionists were no more favourable to Flemish than the Church had been. They strove to substitute French, the language in which the republican laws were written and which they believed had a special virtue as an instrument of emancipation, for Flemish, which they regarded as one of a number of insignificant idioms only fit to express servile sentiments and retrograde ideas. Thus a Report prepared in 1790 says, "The great crime of patois is that they prevent the political amalgam. They keep people away from the truth. The fusion of all classes and of all provinces, in one uniform nation, will be the fruit of the unity of language." The French were, however, unsuccessful in seeking to substitute French for Flemish as the language of the

people. In 1830, when Belgium became an independent kingdom, Flemish still maintained its position as the language of the people of Flanders, but it had degenerated from want of culture and become impoverished. The official language of the country was French. But since 1830 a great popular movement in favour of the use of Flemish in Flanders has sprung up and achieved numerous reforms. The motto of this Flemish movement is "In Flanders Flemish," and Flemish has in later years become more and more the language of the Law Courts and of Government officials. No judge or advocate can now be appointed in Flanders unless he has a knowledge of Flemish. "We object," say the Flemings, "to be judged by men whom we pay but do not understand." In the Communes, in the primary and secondary schools, and in the army, Flemish has to some extent taken the place of French. The streets throughout Belgium are named in both languages, and all official documents, including the official *Monitor*, are published in both languages, generally in parallel columns. The Flemish tongue is spoken by greater numbers now than at the beginning of the century; the Flemish papers, such as the *Handelsblad* of Antwerp, have a very large circulation; important works in all branches of literature and science are written in Flemish, and Flemish plays are performed in the theatres. Especially remarkable is the progress of

Flemish in the secondary schools of the Walloon district, and the desire shown by the directing classes that their children shall acquire a good knowledge of Flemish in the schools. The prejudice formerly felt against Flemish dies away as its utility in a country which is becoming more and more bilingual manifests itself. The Walloons are taunted to-day with their quickness in learning Flemish when an official position is at stake. It would now be impossible for an official to protest against the teaching of Flemish in the public schools of Brussels lest "the learning of this patois should spoil the French accent of the children"; neither would a Burgomaster of Brussels assert, "there are no Flemings in Brussels." A general conference held each year of those interested in preserving for Flemish Belgium its native language has had great influence in promoting this object; and one striking proof of the conviction held by the Government that this national feeling must be conciliated was the appointment of the great Flemish novelist Conscience as teacher of Flemish to the royal princes.

The struggle between the two languages has naturally produced bitter feeling in Belgium as the language fights always have done in Austria, Cape Colony, etc.; "When the question of language comes up in parliament," said the President, "everyone speaks at once, and we can understand nothing."

The Flemings taunt the Walloons with being the

party of France seeking to rob a Dutch race of its mother tongue, desiring to bring free Belgium again under the centralizing tyranny of France. The ardent Fleming is accused on the other hand of preferring a mere dialect, with little or no literature and unknown outside narrow limits, to a world language so highly developed, so widely spoken, and with such a magnificent literature as the French. The Walloon stigmatizes the Fleming as a "Flamingant"; the Fleming nicknames the Walloon "Fransquillon." The Flemish party formed a procession to go to Waterloo to celebrate the deliverance of Belgium from French tyranny; the Walloons organized a counter demonstration at Jemappes to show their sympathy with France. So keen is the feeling against the French language among some distinguished Flemings, that the great Flemish poet Hiel, an ardent Flamingant, is said to have consistently pretended he did not understand French; while in an interview I was fortunate enough to obtain with a very distinguished Flemish poet, M. Pol de Mont, he immediately turned our conversation from French to German, apologising for his inability to converse in English.

Generally speaking, however, the partisans of each language now acknowledge the claims of the other, and the aim is rather to make educated Belgium bilingual than to give predominance to either language.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

Elementary Education in Belgium is free but not compulsory. There has been a strong movement for years to make elementary education compulsory, and indeed compulsory education is an article of faith of the Liberal party in Belgium, but at the present time the achievement of this object seems distant. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that as regards elementary education Belgium falls far behind most European countries. A glance at the following figures, showing the number of illiterates per thousand in various continental armies, gives an idea of Belgium's position :

Illiterates per thousand soldiers.

Belgium.....	130
France	74
Switzerland	8
Denmark	2

In the large towns, however, such as Brussels and Antwerp, where the Communes make great sacrifices for elementary education, and where there are excellent elementary and higher elementary schools, the attendance is fairly satisfactory, since the parents realize the importance of education. The programme of the instruction varies greatly in different localities, each Commune making its own programme. The Belgians highly prize the great communal liberty

which they enjoy and do not share in the French love of centralization and unity in education. In the country districts of Flanders the only language taught in the elementary school is Flemish, and little is done for French, it being felt that with the time at the disposal of the school no serious progress can be made with a second language. In some village schools, however, I found French lessons given after school hours, and for these a charge was made; in other villages again, where the population was considerably mixed, the second language was a part of the ordinary school work. In Brussels, which provides the best instances of bilingual elementary schools, I found that pupils leaving the elementary schools had a good knowledge of both French and Flemish. In these schools the methods employed are especially worthy of note. The following is a typical programme of the hours allotted to languages in the primary schools of Brussels:

Hours per week.

	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year	5th year	6th year
Mother tongue	10½	9	7½	7	6	7
Second language	3	5	4½	4½	3½	4½
Total hours in school } per week	29½	29½	29½	30¾	31½	33½

Note.—Pupils enter at the age of six and the course lasts six years.

In Antwerp, where there is much less French than at Brussels, the mother tongue is Flemish; in Brussels, however, the schools that I visited were very mixed, and the Walloons had separate classes from the Flemings until the 4th year, when the classes were mixed and the school language for the last three years was French. Many lessons were given for half the time in one language and then repeated in the other; pupils in the higher classes conversed freely in both languages. Of course, in a town like Brussels, where the two languages are so much heard, the children are continually called upon to use both languages, the utility and indeed the necessity of knowing them is impressed upon the pupils, and this has a great effect on their progress.

The following is the programme of hours allotted to languages in the primary schools of Antwerp:

Hours per week.

	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year	5th year	6th year
Mother tongue (Flemish)	10	10	6	6	6	6
French	—	2½	5	5	6	6
Total school hours	28	28	31	31	34	34

In Antwerp the language of the people is Flemish; French is more or less a foreign tongue, and I did not find children using French at all freely, though those pupils who go on to the higher elementary school

gain a good knowledge of French. In the schools of Antwerp little French is heard outside of the French lessons.

Great efforts are made, as I have shown in my account of the lessons, to make the teaching of the second language a real knowledge of the spoken language, and though in many cases the masters adhered to the grammatical exercises and translations with which we have long been familiar, yet great efforts are being made by the Inspectors and central authorities to introduce the direct method. In the *Teachers' Guide* published by the Commune of Brussels, which contains the programme for the school year with a valuable exposition of the methods to be employed in teaching the various subjects, the following instructions are printed with regard to the teaching of the second language:

“The second language should be taught by the natural or direct method. This method consists in teaching a language without having recourse to translation, save when it is necessary to establish a close and direct communication between words and ideas. The teacher must proceed intuitively and progressively. The basis of study will be the common vocabulary, and the principal lessons will be in all classes lessons of intuition and in the use of the language. These lessons will treat of notions familiar to the children (the family, furniture, clothes, etc.), or of subjects which have already been taught in the

mother tongue. The whole attention will thus be concentrated on the correct pronunciation of the words and on the construction of the phrases. The teacher must strive to put before the eyes of the pupils the objects of which he speaks, or representations of them by models or drawings; to grasp the verbs the action must if possible be performed, for the adjectives the method will be to show several objects which have a common quality. In a word, the teacher of the second language will proceed by the best of all methods, that which a mother uses instinctively when she teaches her child to speak."

Visits to Elementary Schools. Rue Six Jetons (girls). Inspector de Vos advised me to pay my first visit to this school, and I found the lessons here typical of the best methods of giving pupils from the outset such practice in speaking as well as in writing as leads to really acquiring a modern language. The pupils are Walloons and Flemings, and there are two sets of classes in the lower part of the school, the Walloons being taught in French, the Flemings in their own language, till at the age of nine the school language is entirely French, save in the teaching of Flemish. In the lowest class (first year) there were 36 Flemish pupils on the day of my visit, the average age being about seven. The teacher—a lady—had pinned a coloured picture of a cock to the blackboard, and this formed the subject for a lively lesson carried on entirely in French. The various

parts of the bird—the beak, the crest, the eye, the wing, the tail, etc.—were named and pointed out. The teacher pointed to the tail for instance, saying in French, “This is the tail”: then the class repeated after her, “Mademoiselle, it is the tail.” Next the colour of these parts was pointed out. By changing the verb all the parts were repeated again, and the pupils were called out to point out or touch the leg, the beak, the tail, etc., and later the pronoun was altered so that the class said, “Nous montrons la queue, la tête,” and so on. The teacher took advantage of the colours to call for articles of the same colour in the class, and thus arrived at such sentences as, “I show the red ribbon of Marie,” or, “We show John’s black tie.” The names of the female, of the cry, of the food of the cock, were introduced and the lesson was very full and very lively. The pupils then sang at my request some songs in French and Flemish, and the accent certainly gains much from the singing.

In the next class there were 36 girls, the average age between seven and eight. The teacher had a series of pictures illustrating a simple story, and these pictures were shown to the children in succession. The first showed a little girl playing with her doll, while a dog and a kitten looked on. After pointing out and naming all that was on the first picture the teacher showed another picture. The little girl had gone and the dog and the kitten sat looking at the doll. In the

next picture they had seized the doll and begun playing with it. Then the picture was changed again, and we saw the doll torn to pieces, while the dog and the kitten, looking somewhat remorseful and shamefaced, regarded the mischief they had caused. The little girl returned and the dog and the kitten were punished. The class maintained the keenest interest as each successive picture was shown, and the teacher, largely by means of questions, unfolded the story, speaking nothing but French. Many words and phrases were introduced into the lesson, new words being continually written on the black-board. The story was then gone over again, this time in Flemish, and afterwards the children were required to write in French and also in Flemish an account of the incident. Such a lesson was a striking proof of the interest which children may be induced to take in a language lesson, and the apparatus required is of the simplest, but such lessons naturally desiderate a teacher fully acquainted with both languages. In this class again the children recited and sang in both languages and with good accent. In the third year pictures were again employed. The lesson I attended was on Natural History, and the first picture showing a serpent and a frog with a landscape in the background served to introduce a number of animals and geographical terms. Occasion was taken to describe the movements of the frog, the frog leaps, a man walks, etc., and no doubt

many words were used which the class did not comprehend at the moment, though through constant repetition, they seemed to grasp the words, the names of the animals, and the verbs associated with the different movements very rapidly. The lesson was given in French, then given again in Flemish, and the composition set in both languages.

In the highest class of the school (31 girls of 14 years) the same method was employed. The picture in this case represented a woman and a child at sea in a boat. They pass several ships, which are described, go on board one, and then return to land. Opportunity was thus given to describe the sea, the weather, the various kinds of ships and the sailors. The whole lesson was afterwards written out as a composition, first in Flemish and afterwards in French.

In the Rue Six Jetons school (boys) great stress is laid on *action* in language teaching. Various acts are performed by the class, and by individual members of the class, and the description of these actions is immediately associated with them. Thus in the lowest class of young Walloons, the pupils played at shop. The only language used was Flemish, not a word of French being permitted. Several articles were placed on the table before the class, and then a boy stood up and came before the class, describing in sentences each action. "I stand up, I leave my seat, I come before the class. I salute my teacher."

The class in answer to the teacher's question described all these actions in the third person. "He stands up, he comes before the class, he salutes his teacher." Then the boy took up the various articles on the table, "I sell chalk, a penholder, a pencil, ink, paper," the class repeating in the third person these statements, "He sells chalk," etc. In order to fix these words and phrases in the mind another boy performed the same series of actions, the class again repeating all in the third person. With two boys the acts of selling and buying were performed, the one asking for a piece of chalk, paper, etc., and the other giving him each article, saying at the time, "I sell a piece of chalk," etc., while the class took a part in the proceedings, describing the action in the third person. Money was also introduced and the verbs buying, selling, holding, paying were fully learned by the pupils by the end of the lesson. In another class the spinning of a top formed the subject. A boy comes out, takes a top out of his pocket and spins it before the class. Such a simple action introduces a good number of words—tie, wind, throw, spin; and the teacher took the occasion to talk of the danger of spinning tops in the street, explaining why it is forbidden, all the time questioning the class and giving them a real share in the work of the lesson. The lighting of a match proved a very fruitful theme. The most lively class was the next one, in which two boys lay down on chairs in front of the class. The alarm

of fire is raised, both spring up, pull on their coats, one goes for the fire-engine, the firemen come up with imaginary cans and extinguish the flames. It is certainly very necessary in such lessons that the teacher should be a good disciplinarian; but with a good master the system worked admirably and afforded a good deal of amusement, while the words were vividly grasped and retained.

The visitor to Brussels who only sees the principal Boulevards, the great thoroughfares and the residential quarter full of boarding-houses and hotels, and who hears on all sides little but French, might easily form a very erroneous idea of the language of a large proportion of the people. A few minutes' walk, however, from the principal station leads over a canal bridge through busy streets crowded with carts and waggons into the industrial district of Molenbeck St Jear, where French gives place to Flemish. Here one is as much in Flanders as at Antwerp. Inspector de Vos had advised me to study two schools especially, one in a thoroughly French district, the other in a Flemish district. The excellent school at Molenbeck showed with what success children in this Flemish quarter, following the course of an elementary school up to the limit of 14, could be taught to read, write and converse in two languages. The day I spent at this admirable school left on my mind a deep impression of the magnificent work carried on by the Director and his staff. One point calls for

special comment. In the whole school there were very few absentees; in many of the larger classes, none. This is remarkable in a country where there is no compulsion to attend school, and where the Director has to rely on his own influence on the children and on their parents. By means of continual letters to the parents and the influence he has with them and the pupils, the Director has been able to ensure a regular attendance of practically all the pupils in the school.

The lowest class was taught by a mistress. Pupil teachers are unknown in Belgium. The youngest children require the most skilled teachers and women are most successful with the beginners. The class of 35 boys of about six years was in excellent order and keenly interested in the lesson. The mistress called a boy out to the platform in front of the class, and pointing to his head, said in French, "What is this?" The answer came from one of the pupils, "Mademoiselle, it is the head," and then, pointing to the arms, the legs, back, etc., the pupils named the various parts of the body, sometimes answering all together, or as called on by the mistress. And so with articles of clothing. "What am I pointing at?" showing a boy's collar. "Mademoiselle, it is a collar." "Who has a collar besides?" "Mademoiselle, I have a collar"; and then a tie, pocket, waistcoat, etc., colours and numbers were introduced into the lesson. Pointing to a red tie, the teacher asked, "What colour is

this tie?" and then, "Who else has a red tie, who has a blue tie, who has a green tie?" Different pupils were called on in succession to come before the class, to set questions to the others, and at times the whole class answered together. There was no word of Flemish spoken, and the whole class was kept vigorously occupied. One boy recited with a good accent and suitable gestures a poem in French, another in Flemish, and the class sang in both languages.

In another lesson given to children of seven years the lantern was used to show in succession a number of pictures illustrating an adventure in which a dog saved the life of a child. In the course of seven pictures Remy and his brother are seen out for a walk with a large dog. The little boy falls into the river while trying to pick a water-lily, and is saved by the dog. Then a man, attracted by the cries of Remy, comes up, and carries the dripping child home, and his mother puts him to bed, the final scene showing the dog petted and caressed by the family, while the child is sitting up in bed, drinking warm gruel. The whole incident was related by the teacher in Flemish, the class being continually questioned on each scene. Then the scenes were gone through again, this time in French, the teacher continually talking and making the class answer in French and repeat the names of different actions. The lesson was exceedingly lively and the class brisk and active the whole time.

It is obvious that such teaching makes a great strain on the teacher; the results achieved are very remarkable.

In another class the cries of different animals were gone through, each word being written on the board in both languages, and later, sentences were written on the board and exercises formed by changing the person or the number in each sentence.

In another class the pupils were exercised in changing the persons and numbers of the extract written on the board. The pronunciation in the school was particularly good, and this was attributed by the Director to the care given to the sounds at the early stages. One of the masters has invented a system by which each sound is connected with a manual sign, and as far as possible the sign represents the form of the mouth in uttering the sound. The study of phonetics though not connected with the usual phonetic alphabet has certainly produced good results at this school.

A good method for training learners in the right use of the verbs and especially the past participles was employed. A long extract had been written on the board, each of the verbs having been changed into the infinitive and underlined. It then became an admirable exercise for the pupils to put these infinitives into the correct form, reasons for the change being given, the whole discussion between pupils and teacher being carried on in French.

Also in Dictation the method of correcting was worthy of notice. While the class wrote the dictation one pupil had done so on the blackboard, which was turned away from the class. When the dictation was finished the teacher turned the board and the class pointed out the mistakes on the board, different pupils coming out and making the corrections. These corrections were made at the end of a few sentences, which seems preferable to waiting till the effort of thought in writing a particular word is forgotten.

In another class, which was occupied in reading from a book of selections, frequent appeals were made by the teacher (in French always) for the plural of particular nouns, or the masculine or feminine of words occurring. Invariably a phrase was demanded and the subject-matter afforded opportunity for questions and conversation.

Throughout all the classes in this school recitations and the rendering of part-songs formed a great feature.

In the top class of a school I heard a lesson in Mathematics in which the pupils showed that they could carry on calculations with rapidity and accuracy both in Flemish and in French.

The Geography lesson, in which the lantern was used, was exceedingly interesting and gave the class a good idea of such towns in Belgium as were of particular historical or economic business interest. This lesson was given entirely in French, which now seemed quite familiar to the young Flemings.

At Bruges I visited the elementary school for boys with the Director of the schools. The other elementary schools of the district are all under his direction, a system which obtains also in Switzerland. The boys remain generally at school until the age of 14 but they do not speak French at all. In school they use Flemish and manage to read French with capital accent, but here I think it is evident that with the modern methods the pupils would learn to speak as well as to read French.

The girls, on the other hand, understood much more quickly, followed a lesson given in French, and spoke well.

They begin in the lower classes with lessons on the various parts of the body, the articles of the schoolroom, and then later the playground, the street, the home. Even in the girls' kindergarten one finds that French is spoken. There was a striking difference between the boys and the girls at Bruges, principally arising no doubt from the greater zeal with which the girls follow the language lessons, the utility of French being more apparent in the case of girls likely to be in service in a family where French is used, than to boys who become workmen in Flanders and rarely use French. Even if the boys learn French at school and acquire a certain proficiency, they often forget it in after life. In the country districts Flemish is the usual language, and when as in England we find that pupils forget in after life the lessons learnt

at school, when we find that reading and writing are almost totally forgotten, it is not surprising that a second language frequently leaves small traces behind.

In the Elementary Schools at Antwerp I found little worthy of note in the teaching of French. Inspector Daems, who exercises supervision over all the primary schools at Antwerp, told me that the pupils in the elementary schools make but little progress in French unless they remain at school the full time, and then go on to the *école primaire supérieure*. The pupils, however, who follow continuation classes in French immediately after leaving the primary school, manage to speak French fairly well. The programme stipulates that the instruction in French shall be oral, that as little as possible shall be done by books and that pupils shall hear only French in the class-room. A more highly educated body of teachers is required to carry out such a programme efficiently. Inspector Daems thinks that if the pupils talked French in the playground, where each pupil could try to express his ideas without the restraint of the master, much greater progress would be made. Pictures are used to some extent in Antwerp in giving instruction in the second language, but not with sufficient intelligence. A mixture of the old and new methods is very common. Thus a master says the word "père" for "father," and then writes it on the board. A picture

of a father and son should be shown, and the teacher should point to the father and say "père," to the son and say "fils." It is not enough for the Government to recommend the intuitive method to masters who are not able to realize its advantages. The walls of Belgian schools are covered with historical pictures, but the pupils do not always know what these pictures represent. In spite of the efforts of the authorities the teaching of History and Geography is in many cases a teaching of words, a teaching which conveys no definite impression to the mind.

In Antwerp, it is worthy of note, the primary education is free to all parents who apply for it. In the rest of Belgium those parents pay whose rates are above a certain figure.

SECONDARY EDUCATION.

The secondary schools of Belgium are of two types, the Écoles moyennes (Middle Schools), and the Athénées (Higher Secondary Schools). The École moyenne has a course of three years, and pupils must be at least 11 years old on entering. The leaving age at the École moyenne is generally about 16. There is also in general a preparatory section attached to the school—the entrance age for which is six years. This preparatory section corresponds to the elementary schools. Appended is a time-table of the École moyenne.

Hours per week.

	1st year	2nd year	3rd year
Religion.....	2	2	2
French	8	7	6
Flemish	6	6	6
History	2	2	2
Geography.....	1	1	1
Mathematics	4	5	6
Natural Science ...	2	2	2
Book-keeping and) Commercial Law)	—	1	2
Drawing.....	2	2	2

English, German and Music are optional in addition to the above. In Walloon districts German may be substituted for Flemish. Gymnastics. Three hours during recreation.

The fees vary in different districts, the average being about £3 per annum.

French is everywhere the language of the secondary school, but in the playground and streets of such Flemish towns as Antwerp the pupils talk Flemish constantly. Save in the South where German is chosen, the second language is almost invariably Flemish. In Flanders Flemish is used in teaching German and English, the two languages with which it has most affinity, and in the lessons in History, Geography and Natural Science. These schools are therefore bilingual: both languages are constantly heard and used by the pupils. It is evident that under such conditions there is a great inducement to make the language lessons a real introduction to the spoken language. Knowledge which is confined to sentences of the kind with which the exercise books have made us familiar, and which is quite divorced from ordinary life, is immediately seen to be useless. This constant linguistic training in the schools must have a great influence in producing the remarkable ease with which Belgians, more especially Flemings, acquire modern languages.

Since the knowledge of Flemish has become absolutely indispensable in many professions, and above all in the legal profession, the schools have devoted themselves all over Belgium to giving the pupils a thorough practical knowledge of the two languages.

Athénées.

In the Athénées there is a seven years' course, the age of pupils being generally 11—18; the following is the time-table :

WALLOON DISTRICT ATHÉNÉES.

I. *Classical Section.*

	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year	5th year	6th year	7th year
Religion	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Latin.....	6	7	8	8	8	8	8
Greek	—	—	5	5	5	5	5
French	7	6	3	3	3	3	3
Flemish or German }	—	5	3	3	3	3	3
History	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Geography	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mathematics.....	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Natural Science	—	—	—	2	2	2	2
Drawing	2	2	2	—	—	—	—
Total number of lessons... }	23	28	29	29	29	29	29

In the Flemish district Flemish is obligatory, and also one other Teutonic language, either English or German.

Additional languages are optional both in the Flemish and Walloon districts.

II. *Latin Section.*

In this section there is no Greek—the time is given to Mathematics and Science.



III. *Modern Section.*

No Latin—hours given to Modern Languages and commercial or scientific subjects.

The leaving examination consists of two parts, the one a written examination of the type familiar to English schools, and the oral examination to which only those pupils are admitted who have gained 50% marks in the written examination. The oral examinations, at two of which I was present, are conducted by a committee of the principal teachers (heads of departments) of the school presided over by a member of the Commune. In the modern language the examination was conducted entirely in the language taught by the teacher, and such an examination brings out well all the pupil knows, and gives the teacher opportunities of touching on work to which he has devoted particular attention. The diploma mentions that the pupil has followed the course of studies in an *Athénée* or *École moyenne* "avec fruit," "avec grand fruit," or "avec le plus grand fruit." Pupils are not admitted to examinations unless they have followed a course for three years in the case of the *Écoles moyennes* and six years in the case of the *Athénées*.

In spite of the strenuous efforts to impress on parents the advisability of pupils following the whole course so as to attain the diploma of the leaving examination, the tendency to leave the schools too early is continually deplored.

The study of the elements of four languages at the same time is discouraged. Pupils must have gained a certain percentage of marks for two languages before they are allowed to proceed to the third and fourth.

The following are general instructions published with regard to the teaching of modern languages in secondary schools :

“The object to be attained by the study of living languages is, independently of the general culture to which this part of the programme should contribute equally with the others, a sufficient knowledge of the foreign idiom not only to read it without effort and to enjoy its literature, but also to speak it and write it without too great difficulty. This double object indicates the method to be followed.

(1) Grammar and Vocabulary, theory and application will always be united.

(2) Grammar will not be cut up into sections. Omitting from the commencement peculiarities and exceptions, the teacher will give what is essential, the general and indispensable rules, leaving till later the correct writing of the language and syntax.

(3) The reading book will serve as basis and pivot for the exercises in conversation.

(4) Dictation will be employed in the lower classes to form the ear, and will serve at the same time as an exercise in pronunciation,” etc., etc.

In the triennial Report published in 1899 the work of the Walloon schools in Flemish is criticised as follows, "The written language is taught in a satisfactory manner and the number of young persons capable of properly expressing their ideas increases from year to year. Is this true for the *spoken language*? It suffices to know that the method based on translation and the study of grammar, to the exclusion of exercises in speaking, is still in force in the greater part of the Athénées to be able to reply negatively." Again in speaking of German and English the Report says, "The majority of teachers considering that the translation, the exercise and the essay, which are the tests in the general examination, are the great objects to be realized, exercise the pupils particularly in translating and writing correctly. Doubtless there is reason to congratulate them on the zeal which they have shown, and the results which they have obtained; but they lose sight of the fact that the teaching of living languages differs essentially from that of dead languages.....

"It is a commonplace that the pupil cannot learn to speak a language if he has not heard it spoken by his master."

In the visits which I have described to secondary schools, it will be seen that the direct method is already much in use and it is gaining ground rapidly.

Athénée Royale at Brussels.

I first attended a lesson given to 17 pupils aged 18, which consisted of dictation and paraphrasing. The mother tongue of the class was evidently French, but the pupils expressed themselves with ease in Flemish, and had no difficulty in finding synonyms for the classical Flemish of the portion set as an exercise. The piece chosen served as a subject for conversation. The master told me that for the first three months no books are used ; appeal is made solely to the ear.

In the higher class five pupils aged 17 were studying an English novel and the professor spoke in English the whole time, paraphrasing the more difficult parts and gave synonyms for unusual expressions. An excellent choice had been made with regard to the text-books, *Vice-Versa* by Anstey afforded a large number of colloquialisms which the pupils put into more usual English. In the preceding year *The Rivals* had been chosen. Here, as everywhere on the Continent, the choice of text-books is left entirely to the professor, and as far as I saw, excellent books had been selected. One pupil gave a résumé of the previous chapter and another described the various characters of the book, while a third described the plot of the whole novel.

In the third class of 12 boys aged about 14, the English language was employed during the lesson. An extract had been written on the board and after

it had been read, particular words were taken and explained. After the piece had been thoroughly discussed, one boy dictated it to the whole class while another wrote on the board. In another class *Three Midshipmen* by Kingston was being studied. The master was convinced of the advantage to the pupils being bilingual, and he thought that the Flemings had an advantage over the Walloons since they acquire both German and English much more easily than the Walloons, who more nearly resemble the French in their linguistic habits. The Flemings have always felt the absolute need of French—a second language is imperative to them; until lately the Walloons considered the Flemish a dying language, a patois which it was beneath their dignity to acquire. Motives of expediency, however, have completely changed the attitude of the Walloons, and Flemish is almost as eagerly studied in the schools as French.

At the secondary school for girls of which Mademoiselle Gatti de Gamond is Headmistress I attended some excellent lessons. This school has a very high reputation in Belgium.

The first lesson in Flemish to four girls (aged 17) consisted of the paraphrasing and discussion of a poem by the Flemish poet Hiel. The Walloons in the class had a remarkable knowledge of Flemish, and the teacher, a daughter of the poet, discussed with the pupils the subject-matter of the poem—the

grammatical points being explained thoroughly on the blackboard.

The German lesson which I heard given to pupils of 16 was in the series system familiar to English people as the Gouin method. The action described was that of a person going to the railway station in a strange city—the teacher first stated the different steps :

I am in a strange city.

I do not know the way.

I want to go to the railway station.

I must ask my way.

I meet a lady.

I accost her.

I ask my way to the station.

She tells me the second turning to the left and then the first to the right.

I thank her.

I take the second turning to the left.

I take the first turning to the right.

I arrive at the station.

Later the class repeated the sentences when the teacher gave the verb, and then one pupil repeated the whole when the teacher gave the verb. After the series had been thoroughly grasped the grammatical points came up for discussion.

The third lesson was an English lesson to 11 pupils of 17 years (average). The class was reading Stanley Weyman's *Gentleman of France*—

and one pupil gave in excellent English a résumé of the preceding chapter—then the events of the book afforded matter for conversation. Questions of the following type were asked: “Who are the principal characters of the book? What mission had Marsac to fulfil? How did he fulfil this mission?” and so on. Two hours a week are given to English, the principal secondary language being German. Though the mother tongue of nearly all pupils at this school is French, Flemish is much used in conversation and in the playground, and in some of the lessons, as for instance History and Geography, Flemish is the vehicular language.

In the course of many visits to schools in the Walloon district I was especially interested in my visit to the *École moyenne* for boys at Huy. There is very little Flemish in this industrial town, but a serious attempt is made throughout the school to teach Flemish by the direct method. In all classes pupils are taught to use the language, and the lessons are from the beginning given in Flemish. Thus the pupil performs an action, describing all the time what he is doing, and afterwards the action is described by another pupil. The actions performed were such simple ones as walking to the door, opening it, closing it, and returning to the desk, or taking up a book, opening it, reading, shutting and returning the book to the desk.

In the afternoon I was present at the *Examen de*

sortie (Leaving Examination). On the result of this examination the certificates (leaving) are awarded to pupils who are leaving the school. A written examination had already taken place and pupils were only admitted to the oral if they had done creditably in the first part. The examining committee consisted of the teachers of the various subjects, the president being a lawyer representing the Burgomaster. There were present on this occasion in addition to the president and the headmaster, four masters and the priest who taught divinity. About twenty minutes were allotted to each pupil. The priest began the examination with such questions as, "What is law?" "What is conscience?" "What is mortal sin?" Questions following on the Old Testament, the Decalogue, perjury, serment utile, serment inutile, theft. The pupil answered readily and at times the examination took the form of a disputation, the priest pressing the pupil with questions arising from his answers. "Is it a mortal sin to steal a penny?" was a question which caused the pupil some hesitation. The French master followed with questions on the theme chosen by the pupil in the concours général which had just taken place, and the pupil described how he had discussed the benefits of civilization in his examination paper. "Why did you not refer to Marchand?" said the master, and then elicited from the pupil how much he knew of recent exploration in Africa, the slave trade, and the part that England had

taken in its suppression. Questions in Mathematics and Natural Science followed with an examination in Book-keeping and Commerce. I was struck with the familiarity of the pupil with bills of exchange, promissory notes, cheques; samples of all were handed to the pupil and he described the meaning of the various stamps and signatures. The teaching was thoroughly in touch with the actual methods employed in the business houses of the country. The examination in Flemish consisted of reading from an author and then questions (in Flemish) on the subject-matter. In this case a poem was taken from a book of selections, and the pupil gave an account of the author and his other works. Etymological points were touched on. The word *frühstuck* gave rise to a comparison between the different names for the meal, in English breakfast, French *déjeuner*, and the derivation of each word. Other questions followed on the relation of Flemish to German, Platt-deutsch and English, and the pupil showed in passing that he had read some of the works of the great Platt-deutsch novelist Fritz Reuter. The questions on Grammar dealt with definitions of adverbs, adjectives and the conjugation of verbs. When the pupil had thus been examined in three subjects, he was given a rest while another pupil was examined in Geography. Advantage was taken of my presence to twit the English on their policy in China. Perfidious Albion has tried to seize all the best parts of the globe, but it is Belgium

that is to profit by the opening up of China, for "la Wallonie" constructs the railway lines for the new Chinese railways. After China the Transvaal. Perfidious Albion again, but in this part of Belgium at least there is little regret that the English language is ousting all others. From Geography we pass to History, and again the headmaster jestingly questions the pupil on Waterloo. The King of the Belgians recommends the teaching of Patriotism in the schools. How can pupils be patriotic if they are not proud of their country and its past history? How can they be proud if their soldiers did not fight bravely? Of course they fought bravely; and so I learn it is not the Belgians who ran away at Waterloo, but an English cavalry regiment whose colonel led them away at full gallop at the very beginning of the fight. And how selfish was Wellington! To protect the English troops he placed the Belgian lines in front to bear the brunt of the battle. In vain I pointed out in a whisper to the Director that if this were so, it was Wellington's duty to give the Belgians the place of honour.

The Battle of Quatre Bras also served as an example of the heroism of Belgian troops and their superiority to other nations. I remembered how firm was my belief at school that one English soldier was equal to three foreigners.

Athénée Royale at Antwerp.

Antwerp is far more Flemish than Brussels. Even

in the Flemish districts of the capital French is much spoken. But at Antwerp one hears Flemish on all sides ; it is the principal language heard in the trams, in the smaller shops, in the streets, at the docks. At the Athénée I found that the language most frequently spoken was Flemish.

In the sixth class the pupils were all young Flemings and made frequent mistakes in French. The average age of this class of 33 pupils was 13. The lesson consisted of an explanation in French of a poem taken from a French reader, *Le chien et le roseau*, by La Fontaine. Questions were asked on the meanings of words, and difficulties explained by means of synonyms ; later grammatical points were discussed. Then the pupils gave in their own language the subject-matter of some tales and anecdotes which had been previously studied. No Flemish was used.

In the third class of 54 pupils aged 17 to 18 the book studied was Boileau's *Oeuvres poétiques*. The class was reading *L'Art Poétique*, and the lesson dealt with the literary character of Boileau's work, pupils taking notes much as in a university. For homework the following was set, "Find the significance of the following words, giving examples from poems : (1) Cadence, (2) Suspendre l'hémistyché, (3) Coupons les mots, (4) Concours odieux."

In the German class there were 28 pupils, the average age being 16. The text-book was

Deutsches Lesebuch aus den besten Schriftstellern, by Hebbel and Pol de Mont. The class read in my presence Geibel's poem, *Hoffnung*, and various pupils gave a life of the author, and the ideas of the poem were discussed. The only language used was German, but at times recourse was had to Flemish, the master only using Flemish when the pupils evidently failed to follow the sense of his remarks. Words were taken which introduced peculiar constructions and pupils made sentences containing the same construction. The grammar used was of the ordinary type *Practisch-theoretisch spraakleerer der Hoogduitsch taal*, by Hebbel and Pol de Mont.

In the Flemish lesson which I attended the teacher was Pol de Mont, the most distinguished poet of the Flemish school and an ardent advocate of the Flemish language; the pupils listened with rapt attention to a vivid description of the story of Lohengrin.

In the fifth class a book of selections by Hebbel and de Mont was the text-book. Pupils had had some verses to learn by heart, and these were said by different pupils—the lesson was of the type already described, synonyms were given entirely in German. The pupils had written out a thème with few mistakes.

In the Physics class the pupils were taught by means of Flemish. Flemish is used in Physics and Geography, but in all the other classes the vehicular language at this, as at other Athénées, is French.

École moyenne, Antwerp.

At the *École moyenne des garçons* the pupils started in the first class by learning sounds rather than letters. No letters were known at first and the pupils simply imitated sounds. In the second class the pupils had a lesson in French, and afterwards the pupils read. In the next class (age 8) the pupils performed calculations in both languages.

Pupils enter the school at the age of six and remain till 16 or 17. In the large girls' school at Antwerp I found nothing particularly worthy of note in the teaching.

The German lessons were given on the exercise-book system; no attempt was made to get the children to converse, and the classes were too large. At the *Institut Communal no. 1*, a secondary school, I attended two lessons; one by an Englishman teaching English, and another by a German also taking his own language. They did not seem to me worthy of notice, the classes wrote exercises and there was no attempt at conversation.

In the course of another visit to the *Athénée* at Antwerp, I attended a lesson by Pol de Mont, and also one in German by Professor Nietschke on Heine. The pupils had a good knowledge of the principal works of Goethe and Schiller. In the commercial section German correspondence is taught, letters are written on various subjects. I heard one on the various kinds of wool.

At the Athénée of Bruges, where there are 200 pupils, of whom 120 are Flemings, and 80 Walloons knowing no Flemish, the teachers are supposed to use the two languages continually in teaching. In practice, however, the Professor speaks the language he prefers. The pupils write their essays in either Flemish or French. If Flemish is the language of the home, the essay is written generally in Flemish. On Prize-day the languages are used alternately—French one year, Flemish the next. The correspondence with parents is in both languages in most schools of the Flemish district. Some parents prefer Flemish, but others consider it an insult to be addressed in that language. "Do you think I cannot understand French?" said an indignant parent to the Director of an Athénée who had written to him in Flemish.

In some of the schools in the German district, as at Seraing and Liège, I attended lessons in German, taken instead of Flemish, and found the pupils able to maintain a conversation in German.

In addition to the State secondary schools, there are many schools maintained by the Catholic clergy with the aid of subsidies from the Government. I was not permitted to attend lessons in these schools, but from interviews which I had with the Directors at Brussels, Oudenarde and elsewhere, I gather that these schools resemble the State schools. In Flanders the Clergy are very strong supporters of the Flemish language and encourage the study of it in their schools.

Each year there is a competitive examination (concours général) for all the secondary schools, when the scholars who enter are arranged in order of merit. There is a growing feeling in favour of suppressing this examination. Many feel that the conditions of language, etc., are so different in different towns, that the comparison of schools by the result of this examination is misleading.

NORMAL SCHOOLS (FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY TEACHERS).

There are no pupil teachers in Belgium. In the employment of children to teach children England enjoys a "splendid isolation." I found that teachers and Inspectors were greatly surprised that in England young pupils should be employed in teaching. The course in the normal schools for elementary teachers is four years, the age of entrance being 15. In addition to the mother tongue one language is obligatory and to this three hours per week are given throughout the course.

The normal schools at Bruges, Ghent and Liège are reckoned among the architectural beauties of those towns. They are indeed palaces of learning. The Belgians of to-day show in these modern buildings that they retain all the love of splendid architecture for which their forefathers were famous.

For teachers in the *Écoles moyennes* there are courses at the normal schools of Ghent and Liège. The minimum age of entrance is 17 and the course lasts two years. Teachers in the *Athénées* must hold a university degree.

At the normal school of Ghent there are three sections:

- (1) Normal school for primary teachers of the district.
- (2) A Practising school consisting of
 - (1) Preparatory section ... 6 years,
 - (2) École moyenne 3 years.

This practising school is therefore really a middle and elementary school for the town, but pupils pay for admission—there are other free schools in the town.

- (3) Normal school for secondary teachers.

In the training college for secondary teachers the teaching is partly in Flemish, partly in French—German and English are taught by means of Flemish in so far as another language is used at all—but the great aim here is to learn the new language by using it. History, Geography, Natural Science and Mathematics are taught half in French and half in Flemish.

In the normal school French is begun at the end of the first year. In this school also the language is Flemish, but repetitions of lessons are often given in French.

The Director told me that the Walloon schools do better in the concours général than the Flemish, and he attributed this to the bilingual character of the Flemish schools. The pupils are somewhat confused with the two languages, and there is a great

mental effort in changing from one language to another. The Director thinks that better results would follow if one language were the recognised language, the mother tongue, while the other should be secondary to it. He does not approve of the attempt to give a nation two mother tongues. In Denmark, in Brittany, in Switzerland, one language is recognised as the language of the country, but in Belgium all is, theoretically at least—bilingual.]

There is no doubt, however, that as far as the learning of modern languages is concerned, the Flemings are far in advance of the Walloons. ✓

École Normale at Liège. (Girls.)

At this school I had the advantage of being present at an examination of students who had completed a year's work.

The examination in Modern Languages was conducted by a jury consisting of three persons. The president was the Government Inspector Kleyntjens, and at his side sat the teacher of the subject. The first student was examined in the English language and the whole examination was conducted in English by the teacher. The other two members of the jury also put questions from time to time as they considered it necessary. The year's work consisted of Dickens's *Christmas Carol* with Grammar and Literature arising from the subject-matter. After the student had read a page (selected by the teacher), she gave the subject-matter of what she had read in

her own words, and then in answer to questions from the teacher described the character of the book, and the aim of the writer. Then a summary of the book was given, and the substance of various scenes. A short life of Dickens followed, an account of some contemporary authors and a list of similar works. The examination having lasted ten minutes, the remaining half of the time was given to Grammar, the tenses of the verbs, nouns formed from adjectives occurring in the text, plurals, cases of the pronouns and nouns, genders. No subtleties or minutiae of Grammar were touched on, all the Grammar questions being on ordinary points which arose naturally out of the text. When the twenty minutes had elapsed, the Inspector decided whether the student should receive the note *bien*, *très bien*, or simply *suffisant*. Such a method of examining is the most satisfactory one for Modern Languages; there was the obvious disadvantage of nervousness during a *viva-voce* examination, but on the other hand the real knowledge of the pupil revealed itself more fully than could be the case with printed questions. Even when a mistake was made the answers which followed showed whether the Grammar was known. The whole examination was conducted in English and the pronunciation was remarkably accurate. In many cases insufficient attention is given to the sounds at the commencement and the defects are not corrected later, indeed they often tend to grow worse. Elementary mistakes in

pronunciation should be carefully corrected at first and continual practice given to such sounds as *th* for students of English and the *u* for students of French. I remember hearing M. Michel Bréal cite the case of an Englishman, who had lived in Paris for over thirty years, but whose pronunciation was very faulty although he gained a remarkable knowledge of French, and wrote a valuable dictionary (French-English and English-French). His facility in speaking French was remarkable, yet he never improved his pronunciation, and as he grew older, M. Bréal affirmed that the initial defects became accentuated, so that at last his French was almost unintelligible. No doubt M. Bréal humorously exaggerated. But I have met French teachers in England whose pronunciation does not improve with time, and this simply from the continual mis-pronunciation of certain simple sounds, easily learnt with a little care at the commencement.

The next pupil was examined in German. The year's work was Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*, and the same method was pursued, a portion of the text was read, questions and answers followed on the poem, the subject-matter, the various types of poetic composition, and an account was given in the student's own words of the poem. Lastly came questions on the Grammar. The last pupil was a Fleming who had studied a book of selections from French authors. After reading a letter of Balzac's, the pupil gave the

subject-matter in her own words, a short account of Balzac and his works and of other French novelists of the same epoch, with an account of their principal works. Questions on the Grammar followed. Although the Flemings take more readily to the modern languages than the Walloons the result at this Walloon college could not, I am sure, be surpassed.

Lesson at the École Normale of Ghent.

There were 15 pupils who had learnt German for one year only. The master took the building of a house and began by asking one pupil what would be the first step to take. "Firstly a site would be chosen and bought; then I would ask an architect to draw up a plan of the house. The plan would then be given to the builder, who would lay a foundation. On the foundation the walls are built, the ground floor, the first story, the second story." Then followed the names of the various rooms; drawing-room, dining-room, kitchen, cellar, with their positions in the building and the stairs leading from one story to another. Then followed a description of the garden with the names of the various trees and fruits. Then the trees led to a description of the different aspects of the garden at different seasons, of the apple-trees, bare of leaves in winter, then green with new leaves and afterwards with the buds and fruit.

Then followed the different parts of the trees, the roots, branches, twigs, leaves. In the whole lesson no word save German was spoken and the lesson was

a striking example of the possibility of dispensing with translation.

Three students recited poems in a dramatic manner, and each piece served as a subject for conversation.

English Lesson at the École Normale of Ghent.

The class consisted of 14 pupils at the end of the first year. Two poems, *Two Rats* and *My Dog*, were recited with excellent accent. One student then gave a description of the room and its furniture, the windows, the best places for the desks as regards light, etc. Another student in answer to a question described a river, its banks, the left and right side, etc. The Thames was taken and the students were questioned as to the reason for its importance. One of the students compared the Thames with the Scheldt, and London with Antwerp, and so by means of questions from the master the pupils described London as a business town, a university town, its trade, manufacture and shipbuilding. Another pupil described the best way to see London, the advantages of the omnibus, tram and cab. In one year the pupils had acquired a good vocabulary of the words used in ordinary intercourse and understood and spoke English. The books used were such as to familiarize them with the ordinary every-day language. Such works as the plays of Shakespeare, containing words and phrases difficult even for English boys, are never used in Belgium. Preference is given

to Dickens and such modern novelists as Conan Doyle, Stanley Weyman, and F. Anstey.

At the *École Normale of Brussels* (boys) I attended several lessons, the most interesting being a lesson on Flemish literature, in which Walloon pupils discussed in Flemish the substance of a poem by a Flemish author.

The entrance-hall of this school contains an excellent school museum. The walls are covered with diagrams, pictures and casts, and the centre of the hall is filled with glass-cases containing specimens of stuffed animals, coins, minerals, etc. At the *École Normale* for girls I attended an excellent English lesson to girls of the second year. The text-book was Dalgleish's *Great Authors of Literature*, published by Nelson. Questions and answers in English followed the reading of an extract, and I was astonished at the facility with which the pupils understood and answered my questions on the contents of the book.

In the Kindergarten in connection with the same school I found children of five and six being taught both languages. Objects were named in Flemish and French, and the children sang and recited in both languages.

The Normal School of Bruges. Lesson in French.

I attended a lesson which was given to pupils of the third year. The book used was a selection of French poems and prose extracts. A girl recited *La Bataille* by Lamartine, with excellent accent,

after which the teacher questioned various students on the metre, on the various types of poetry, epic, lyric and dramatic, and on the lessons which were taught by this particular poem. After a number of questions on the form and matter of the poem, the life of the author was taken, and a short account given of Lamartine with a criticism of his writings. His work as a historian suggested further questions on contemporary historians, the differences between them and the merits and defects of Lamartine. In discussing Lamartine's style—full of colour and harmony—other masters of the descriptive style, Vigny and Hugo, were named, and their principal works cited.

Another poem, the *Derniers vers* of Chenier, was recited, paraphrased, and the chief ideas which it contained commented on. Questions arose on each line of the poem, and comparisons were drawn between Chenier and Delille.

The lesson showed that the students possessed intimate acquaintance with the literature of the period, and was a proof of the thoroughness with which the work had been prepared.

Not a word of Flemish was used in the lesson, when necessary the explanation was given by means of synonyms, and the accent of the pupils was excellent. The pupils were evidently encouraged to read the best works, not to "get up" books about the great authors. In the examination at Liège also I saw that the pupils had frequent opportunities of showing the extent of their reading.

CONCLUSION.

The description I have given of Belgian Secondary schools shows that pupils "who have gained the Leaving Certificate" have a good knowledge of two languages and are able to converse in one or two others. The need of knowing three or four languages is keenly felt in Belgium, dependent as it is on the great nations which surround it. Belgian manufactures, Belgian commerce are dependent on other Europeans who speak different languages—Germans, French, English. The man of one language is at a great disadvantage in the country where different languages meet the ear every day. Advertisements for clerks, travellers, or other business men generally refer to three or four languages as necessary. Even servants must know two languages. In such a country the necessity of knowing many languages is pressed home to every schoolboy. And the proficiency reached in Belgian schools is therefore due, not only to good teaching, but to the strong feeling of all the pupils of the immediate usefulness of such knowledge.

As linguists the Flemings far surpass the Walloons; they know their mother tongue, they learn

French, and are more ready to go on to other languages than the Walloon, who is perfectly content with his French and whose tongue has not been so much trained. The feeling that formerly existed that Flemish was a useless ballast has now almost completely died away.

In Wales a good grammatical knowledge of Welsh with the linguistic training it brings is unquestionably good educational training, and it is regrettable that such a valuable educational instrument should be left on one side by the schools. I have often regretted that my education, received in a school in the heart of Wales, did not include some knowledge of the language and literature of my own country. I have been ashamed to confess to German students that I knew nothing of the Mabinogion, and to have to evade questions on the Welsh language from Flemings and Frenchmen. With a few hours' judicious teaching per week a fair knowledge of Welsh might have been acquired which would have been greatly increased by conversation outside. The opportunities of practice in Welsh surrounded us, but were seldom taken advantage of. If the school had given a start, if the school had supplied the impulse, the pupils would have quickly made use of the knowledge gained in school, and added to it at home and in the street. This knowledge of Welsh would have been immediately useful to the majority, the practice of using the two languages would have been an excellent

linguistic training for all. Many hold Welsh to be a useless encumbrance to pupils who will never need it in after life. Many Walloons who know no language but French ridicule the learning of Flemish as a useless encumbrance. "We would rather learn Chinese," they say, "it would be more useful." But it is the Fleming who already knows Flemish and French who is readiest to learn Chinese, as he is the first to learn English and German in Belgium to-day. And the Welshman who knows his own language as well as English is much better prepared to acquire other modern languages than a monoglot. Welsh, begun in school and continued afterwards, as it doubtless would be by the majority of pupils, would be more immediately useful than French. The amount of French which pupils have carried away from our schools in the past has not enabled them to ask the simplest question or to read with ease a French book. Far from being a disadvantage, the learning of Welsh would be a help to the acquisition of other languages. But in any teaching of Welsh in schools a proper allowance must be made for it in the time-table—an allowance of half-an-hour or an hour per week for the language is useless. Germans and Belgians do not place a language on the curriculum unless they are prepared to give it at least four hours a week at the commencement.

With regard to the method of teaching, it is absurd to adopt the direct method if the teacher has

not a good knowledge of the language. In some schools teachers, whose French is quite unintelligible to Frenchmen, have been using the direct method. The holiday courses in France and Germany provide means for the better training of teachers. Within the last three or four years a large number of text-books based on the direct method have been published in England, of which the best-known, *Dent's French Course* written by Mr Rippman, is already widely used in Wales. Although the fullest developement of the direct method of teaching languages is to be sought in Germany, this report on Belgian schools, where the method is at present but imperfectly understood and only partially adopted, may not be without some value. I hope that it may at least direct increased attention to the exposition of the direct method of teaching languages to be found in the works of Vietor, in the special reports published by the Board of Education, and in Miss Brebner's report on Modern Language teaching in Germany.

NOTE

BY

W. EDWARDS, M.A., H.M.I.,

MEMBER OF THE STANDING EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF WALES,

ON THE REPORT ON BILINGUAL TEACHING IN BELGIAN SCHOOLS

PRESENTED TO THE COURT OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF WALES

BY

MR T. R. DAWES, M.A.,

HEADMASTER OF THE PEMBROKE DOCK COUNTY SCHOOL,
GILCHRIST STUDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY.

Mr Dawes spent five weeks in Belgium in the early part of 1899 and eight weeks in the summer of that year.

Through the good offices of the Belgian Minister of Education he was enabled to visit educational institutions of every order, from the primary school to the university, and he appears to have made excellent use of his opportunities. In his prefatory remarks he writes:—"I am deeply grateful to the Court for the opportunity I have enjoyed of seeing

the schools of Belgium and of familiarizing myself with the Flemish language. I trust that my report may have some effect in developing the teaching of Modern Languages according to the best methods and of showing that the utilization for educational purposes of the native language of a country—though this language may not be widely used outside its borders—tends to aid the acquisition of other Modern Languages.”

Mr Dawes is not exactly breaking new ground in this. In the volumes of Special Reports, published under the direction of Mr Michael Sadler, may be found a paper by Miss Montgomery on the teaching of Modern Languages in Belgium and Holland. But this fact does not diminish the value of Mr Dawes’ report, for he approaches his task from the point of view of one who himself lives and works in a bilingual country, and the information which he presents to us is, therefore, invested with a special significance.

He visited schools and colleges of various types in Brussels, Antwerp, Bruges, Liège and outlying parts of the Walloon district. Like Miss Montgomery he describes with warm appreciation the success which the direct method brings with it, whether the language be one of the two current in Belgium, French and Flemish, or a foreign language as English and German.

Mr Dawes had probably not the time to visit village schools which would have presented a closer

similarity with the conditions which generally exist in Wales. Being himself in charge of a secondary school he naturally gives his attention mainly to forms of education higher than elementary, but his report contains a valuable notice of the work which is being done in language-teaching in the primary schools of the largest towns, such as Brussels and Antwerp, which should give food for reflection to the managers of education in the urban districts of Wales.

Mr Dawes gives us highly interesting and suggestive descriptions of language lessons heard by him, extracts from directors' instructions to teachers, records of conversations with experts, and many incidental details which throw light upon the general state of education in Belgium. I consider that he has quite justified his appointment as Gilchrist student. Quite apart from the actual value of his report, it is a distinct gain that a native of Wales who holds an educational post in Wales should be in possession of an experience, which will enable him not only to do his own work with better effect but also to assist in the general movement for the improvement of language-teaching in our own bilingual country.



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